
Exhaust Fans Residential

The three types of exhaust fans commonly installed in a residence are:

1. Bathroom exhaust fans,
2. Kitchen exhaust fans, and
3. Attic exhaust fans

Bathroom Exhaust Fans -

Bathroom exhaust fans are installed to provide ventilation and to remove odors and steam. The Uniform Building Code, Section 1203.3, specifies particular requirements pertaining to bathroom exhaust fans. Exhaust fans are allowed in lieu of installing an openable window in a bathroom. Bathrooms that contain only a water closet, lavatory or combination thereof and similar rooms may be vented with an approved mechanical recirculating fan or similar device designed to remove odors from the air.

Permit Requirements

- Permits are required for new installations and replacements of bathroom and laundry room exhaust fans.
- Permits are issued to either the owner or to a State-licensed contractor.
- Permits are issued at the San Jose Building Division Permit Center.
- The Permit Center is located at 200 East Santa Clara St.
- Office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Plans are generally not required for exhaust fans installed in single family dwellings. However, plans may be required for multi-family installations.

Installation Requirements

- Exhaust fans must be *listed* and labeled by an approved testing agency, such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL).
- All equipment shall be installed per the manufacturer's installation instructions and must meet minimum code requirements.
- All exhaust fans must be equipped with a backdraft damper.
- Exhaust fans must be ducted to the outside by means of ducts that comply with provisions of the Mechanical Code.
- Such systems shall be connected directly to the outside, and the point of discharge shall be at least (3) feet from any opening that allows air entry into occupied portions of the building.
- Such systems are not allowed to terminate in the underfloor space or in the attic.
- Ducts shall terminate at least ten (10) feet from a forced air unit fresh air intake or from an evaporative cooler.
- Bathroom and laundry exhaust ducts may be approved aluminum, corrugated or smooth ducts, or smooth galvanized steel ducts.
- For multi-family buildings, exhaust fans and ducts shall not be located in fire-rated wrapback areas (*if applicable*).

Kitchen Exhaust Fans (Hood Vents) -

Residential kitchen exhaust fans (hood vents) are **not required by code**.

However, when an exhaust fan is installed, a permit is required and the work must be inspected and shall be in compliance with the requirements of the Uniform Mechanical Code.

This applies to both new installations and replacements of kitchen exhaust fans.

Permit requirements for kitchen exhaust fans are the same as bathroom exhaust fans.

Installation requirements for kitchen exhaust fans are similar to the bathroom exhaust fans except as follows:

- Ducts shall be metal and shall have a smooth interior surface.
Exception: Downdraft grill ranges may be ducted in steel or PVC if buried under a concrete slab.
- **Clearances** from the cooking surfaces to the bottom of unprotected combustible material shall be 30" minimum. This dimension may be reduced to 24" if the combustible material is protected with a metal ventilating hood.
- **Side clearances to combustibles**, such as cabinets, shall be per the cooktop manufacturer's recommendations.
- For combination microwave/hood vents, follow the manufacturer's installation specifications for clearances.

Attic Exhaust Fans -

Residential attic exhaust fans are often installed in a home to draw air from the inside of a home or attic space to the outside. This can effectually lower the temperature inside, thereby; helping to reduce cooling costs. Residential attic exhaust fans are not required by code. However, when an exhaust fan is installed, a permit is required and the work must be inspected and be in compliance with the requirements of the Uniform Mechanical Code. This applies to both new installations and replacements of attic exhaust fans.

Permit requirements for attic exhaust fans are the same as those for bathroom exhaust fans.

Installation requirements for attic exhaust fans are similar to the requirements of a bathroom exhaust fan when ducting is connected to the exhaust fan. Some special items regarding attic exhaust fan installations are as follows:

- When ducting is used, exhaust fans must be ducted to the outside complying with provisions of the Uniform Mechanical Code (UMC).
- For ducted attic exhaust fans, special consideration must be given when gas-burning appliances are installed in the attic. Gas-burning appliances must be afforded adequate ventilation and combustion air from the outside.

Additional information can be obtained by visiting our website at www.sanjoseca.gov/building/ or by calling our Information Inspector's voice mail at (408) 535-3555 and leaving a detailed message. In addition you may visit the Building Division in City Hall at 200 East Santa Clara St. Our hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with limited service between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.